

31 July 2023

Weekly Blog

By: Philip Pearson-Batt



Papa Don't Preach. Changes To Paternity Leave

Hi, everybody (Hi, Turbo Care!)

How quickly do these weekly blogs come around? How much do I love writing them?

Well I do, especially when I'm writing about my one and only true love: Benji Pearson-Batt.

For those who don't know, Benji is an 18 month old labradoodle who stole mine and my husband's heart from the moment we first met him. He goes by many names: Benji, Benj, Floofs (because he's fluffy), Monster (because he's a monster), Ben-jammin' (because his bottom is always dancing around) and [insert expletive here] (because he is a [insert expletive here]).

To allow me to focus my time and attention on you (my lovely clients), Benji goes to doggy day care twice a week (doggy day care – who have I become?!) In Benji's most recent report from doggy day care, it was noted that he is a highly intelligent dog, although you wouldn't know that as he doesn't often demonstrate this at home.

"Why is this?" Paul & I enquired. Well, it transpires that Benji has learned a new trick.

You see, Karen (the best doggy day care provider you could ever want if you ask me), has a very large stair gate to keep all the pesky doggos out of her living room – it's kitchen and dining room only for the dogs, which Benji is normally very happy with because kitchen = food. However, on one particular day, Benji had decided that, actually, he quite liked the look of Karen's sofa, it looked very comfy thank you very much and if you could pop the TV on, then even better (his favourite thing to watch is, weirdly, tennis or The Golden Girls – a dog after my own heart). So, he managed to get himself over the stair gate and cuddled up on the sofa. Which was fine, until he realised that Karen and all of his doggy friends were back in the kitchen. At this point, Benji couldn't figure out how to get back over the gate so he sat and cried and Karen had to let him back through, tail very much between his legs.

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This now explains why, when we first got him as a little 8-week-old monster and before we named him Benji, the vet had called him Houdini. We should have known then!

Something I could have perhaps done with when Benji first arrived was paternity leave (I totally get it, he's not a child and it's not the same – but still, those first few weeks of a new puppy are hard!)

Paternity leave has, as you will know, been around for years, although it went through some changes in 2015 when “additional paternity leave” was abolished and replaced with Shared Parental Leave.

For those of you who have been keeping up with Precept's recent activities, you'll be well aware that family friendly rights are hot stuff at the minute, especially for the government. And it seems paternity leave is next in line to get something of a “revamp” as the government have now published their response to a 2019 consultation around family-related leave and pay.

The full response to the consultation can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1166182/good-work-plan-consultation-government-response.pdf.pdf

But let me summarise it for you! Respondents to the consultation felt that paternity leave and pay were too rigid and 64% of respondents said the government should provide more flexibility.

Currently, paternity leave must be taken in one go and must be taken within the first 8 weeks after the child is born or placed for adoption. Those wishing to take paternity leave currently have to notify their employers of their proposed leave dates 15 weeks before the expected week of child birth.

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To help make paternity leave more flexible, government are proposing the following changes:

1. Qualifying employees will be able to take their leave in either one block of two weeks or two separate blocks of one week;
2. Qualifying employees will be able to take their leave and pay at any point in the first year (i.e. within 52 weeks of birth or placement for adoption);
3. Qualifying employees will be able to give notice of entitlement 15 weeks before birth and give 28 days' notice before the dates they intend to take each period of leave.

So, the proposed changes aren't exactly massive, but they will make a difference and they're definitely something to be aware of.

There's no indication of when the government will legislate for these changes or when they will take effect but, as I say, it's something that employers will need to have on their radar so that when the changes do land, policies can be reviewed and updated. Obviously, Precept will be keeping a close eye on this and will let you know when hear more about it. If you want to be the first in the know, sign up to be a Precept VIP!